

# SUSAN-ALEXIS BROWN

PH.D. CIVIL & ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING CANDIDATE

*mechanics, materials, & structures*



## 1. Where are you from?

Originally from Martinsville, NJ, and more recently Andover, MA.

## 2. Where did you get your undergrad degree from and what was your major?

**Do you have a MS?**

B.S. in Physics from Gordon College; B.S. in Civil Engineering from University of Southern California; M.S. in Civil Engineering from Northwestern University (as part of completing my PhD work)

## 3. What attracted you to engineering?

I was very interested in building design and engineering of structures from a young age. I had considered architecture before deciding that I wanted to incorporate my interest in math and science more deeply, and chose civil engineering instead.

## 4. What attracted you to pursue a Ph.D. in your specialty area?

During my undergrad at Gordon, I spent time researching bulk metallic glass formation under my advisor Dr. David Lee. Although I was not interested in pursuing that specific field, it definitely sparked my interest in materials in general, and combined with my interest in civil engineering, a material-focused specialty seemed intuitive. My current focus of hybrid structures came about more naturally due to the projects I have had the opportunities to work on at NU.

## 5. How do you explain your thesis research to a non-scientist?

I study the long-term movement of hybrid structures in buildings. For example, a building which is designed with both concrete and wood will have unique interactions between the two materials over 50-100 years, and I try to model those interactions.

## 6. What attracted you to NU?

It was primarily the material mechanics focus of my program (Mechanics, Materials, and Structures in the CEE dept.), however when I visited the campus for the department open house I was also impressed by the community within the department and that became a big part of my decision. The campus and location are also huge bonuses for me (I love winter).

## 7. What has been the highlight of your time at NU and CEE?

My research colleagues under Dr. Cusatis and Dr. Corr are a huge part of my success here, and my enjoyment during the past four years can be attributed in large part to the great environment my advisors cultivate within their groups.

## 8. What has been the most challenging aspect of your graduate school experience?

The overall level of self-motivation and independence needed in a PhD program has been very challenging for me, and I have definitely grown a lot in these areas over the past few years.

## 9. Can you tell us about your experience being mentored or mentoring others?

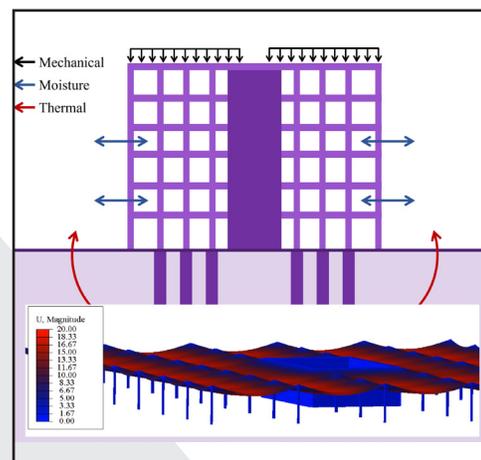
My seniors in my lab were amazing helpful when I first started out, and that experience really stuck with me. I try to promote a similar relationship with the newer students in my lab as well. I also spend a lot of time as a teaching assistant with the master students in our program, and that has really given me a sense of accomplishment in watching those students grow over the course of their program.

## 10. What are your interests or hobbies outside of your research?

I really enjoy gardening and baking. I am on the executive board of the Plant-it-Purple Graduate Gardens, and plant-mom to numerous houseplants, as anyone who has seen our office is well aware of. I also spend a lot of time baking breads and cakes, and fully enjoy sharing the results with my lab mates.



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building materials research